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INTER-WAR MAHARAJAS AS ART PATRONS BETWEEN TRADITIONALISM AND MODERNISM

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in The Department of Art History

by
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January 2020

I dedicate this thesis to my parents. My father has always supported my every move, where my mother’s meticulous critique helped me to improve. What I am today would not be possible without the unique blend of their phenomenal parenting.
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I would like to thank Dr. Darius Spieth not only for inspiring me to write on this topic, but also for guiding me in every step, providing me resources and for his constant feedbacks. I also would like to thank Dr. William Ma for guiding me with his valuable suggestions and Dr. Asiya Alam for helping me with the suggestions on the historical resources I needed to put on.

I would also like to thank Elizabeth Garver from Harry Ransom Center for allowing me to access the archive and providing me all the research material I needed. Their collection on the personal photographs of Maharajah Yashwant Rao Holkar was certainly amazing. I must mention the catalog of *Moderne Maharajah published by Musée des Arts Décoratifs*. It was quite a fortunate coincidence that they arranged an exhibition on Maharajah at the same time when I was writing my thesis, but undoubtedly it helped me a lot with information and photographs. Finally, I would like to thank my amazing parents and siblings for supporting me in every step of the way.
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Abstract

India had carried a traditional history, some of those grew through time and some were fetched from Persia during the Mughal period. From the time of the British-Raj, India had experienced a completely diverse culture derived from western. This Thesis discusses the interests of Indian Maharajas in European culture which grew their attraction towards European art. More precisely I am going to talk about Maharaja Yashwant Rao Holker of Indore and Maharaja Jagjit Singh from Kapurthala, their changing taste away from the tradition. Both Maharaja was highly convinced by the European lifestyle, which reflects their changing tastes towards art. They commissioned several European artists for making their portraits, furniture, and jewelry. These Maharajas perceive the European trend which exquisitely unveils through the arts they have commissioned. Based on the correspondence with the intermediary, French exhibition catalogs on Indian Maharajas and the comparison with traditional Indian taste, I will look forward to explaining their fascination for the European lifestyle. This research is initially inspired by the very recent exhibition held in Musee des Arts Decoratifs, Paris named “The Modern Maharaja”. And in my paper, I am going to compare Maharajas Modern mores with traditional decern. The focal components will be the portraits of the Maharaja and their better halves, painted by Bernard Boutet de Monvel and Philip de Laszlo, photographs by Man Ray, Art Deco-inspired furniture by Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann and pieces of jewelry by Cartier to prove how the Maharajas appreciated the Modern culture into their lifestyle.
Introduction

India is a country of many historical circumstances and enjoys a great cultural diversity. In recent years, the princely states of India have come into focus of modern historians of South Asia.\(^1\) The cultures of India refer collectively to thousands of unique communities. India’s culture and history were a product of much different dominant power of the subcontinent over time. It has twenty-nine states with a great population. Aside from following their main faith in Hinduism, people from different religions like Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity, also live there. Before 1860, India was greatly inspired by the Mughal way of life, which inspired Indian rituals, arts, and lifestyle. When the East India Company entered India, the population came into contact with Western culture for the first time. In the nineteenth century, both the direct administration of India by the British crown and the technological changes ushered in by the industrial revolution had the effect of closely intertwining the economies of India and Great Britain. From 1858 until 1947, India was under British domination, and the Princely States were under local or regional rulers, who governed as deputies and allies of the British Raj.\(^2\) Each of the Princely States had different ruling families, which defined the state’s unique relationship to the British government. These kings were called Maharajas. The word Maharaja, derived from Sanskrit, literally means “Great King.” These princely rulers of India played a unique role within social and historical contexts. The Maharajas had exposure to the British lifestyle, which inspired their cosmopolitan outlook. With the rise of European power in India, the ownership and use of western goods assumed a different meaning. Indian Maharajas found

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1 Waltraud Ernst & Biswamoy Pati. *India’s Princely States, People, Princes, and colonialism.* (London: Routledge, 2007)
2 Ibid, 4-5
themselves increasingly in the situation to accommodate and entertain Europeans. The shift in the balance of power was the result of numerous factors. Many Maharajas were patrons of the arts, which helped them to enhance their royal status, power, and identity. They not only patronized the local arts but also commissioned artists from Europe. Some of the Maharajas between the two world wars were major patrons of modern art and design. The inspiration of the British and Europe left a great impact on the practice of art and culture. Interestingly, it was often Paris but not London that inspires the artistic taste of the Maharajas.

Maharajas' artistic passion for European Modernity came into the world's attention through the ongoing exhibition in Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, titled, *The Modern Maharajah*. The exhibition started on 25 September 2019. The exhibition engaged with the Maharaja of Indore, Yashwant Rao Holkar, and his approach towards modernity. The exhibition introduced the Maharaja as an unapologetic follower of modernity. Maharaja had a great understanding of the modern lifestyle, and he commissioned the best-known artist and designers for him. Indian Maharajas were allied to various western trading companies and displayed a taste for western goods that reflected their political loyalty. The Maharajas had to negotiate and fraternized with Europeans frequently. Eventually, they began to adopt aspects of the western high-society lifestyle and behavior. As an example, Maharajas started sitting on chairs instead of on Gaddi, textiles on the ground. These maharajas were aware of the current fashion trends in Europe, and they had both money and taste to appreciate modernity. Their desire to be a part of the European lifestyle encouraged them to commission paintings,

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3 Ibid, 5-8  
4 Ibid, 28  
6 Ernst & Pati. *India’s Princely States*, 7-8.  
7 Ibid, 18-19  
8 Ibid, 20
photographs, furniture, and jewelry. The Maharajas’ were appreciating western art and design, but they also had a strong traditional background, where the motivation of this thesis stands differently from the perspective of the exhibition. In this thesis, it is focusing on different Maharajas patronizing European art and design with a comparison of their traditional background. This thesis will be concerned with the Maharajas’ fascination with modernism and their patronizing European modernity during the years between the two world wars. It will stress in particular of portrait painting, photography, furniture, and jewelry.

Painting considered a great medium of artistic expression. The Mughals introduced miniature paintings to India. The subjects of Mughal paintings focused mainly on the Emperors and their court activities. The Mughals brought artists from Persia to train the local court artists. Later, when the British came to power in 1857 through East India Company, India got introduced to the western oil painting. Subsequently, “Company Style Painting,” emerged, that embraced by local Indian artists. Company painting was also noted as Indo-European style painting. Company Style painting blended with traditional elements from Rajput art but adopted the Western manner of perspective, volume, and recession. Most paintings were small, reflecting the Indian Mughal miniature tradition, but some of the natural history paintings of plants and birds were life-size. State Maharajas used to commission these well-trained painters for their portraits. Maharaja Yashwant Rao Holkar of Indore, Maharani Sita Devi of Cooch Bihar, Maharani Sanyogita Devi of Indore commissioned European Artists to make a execute of them approximately in between 1925 to 1935.

India, in the early twentieth century, developed creativity in furniture making because

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10 Ibid., 70-72
of highly skilled artisans. India had great craftsmanship in Furniture making. British officers used to commission Indian artisans to make customized furniture for their Indian residence and sometimes for exportation in Europe. This furniture was also selected to decorate the Palaces of Indian Maharajas. During the British Raj, Maharajas had to adjust the setup of their interiors to please Europeans. Some of the Indian stated had to build separate western-style reception rooms to entertain the Europeans. Initially, this was a necessity but later Majaharas truly appreciated to European designer furniture, handed out commissions for the furniture and interior of their Indian palaces.

Maharajas appreciated all the forms of art and design. Jewelry was also a very important form of art. Indian Maharajas also had a keen interest in jewelry. Since the Mughal period, Emperors and Maharajas had a role as the collectors of jewelry. In the twentieth century, Maharaja Jagjit Singh, Maharaja Yashwant Rao Holkar, and Maharaja Bhupinder Singh, among others, commissioned jewelry from the best-known jewelry houses of Europe, especially France. However, Indian Maharajas had an important role in introducing modern European fashion and design in India.
**Portrait Painting and Photography**

Across many cultures in the world, portrait paintings played an important role in the documentation of historical figures and events. The prime intention of a portrait painting is to capture a person’s unique facial expressions, which capture the likeness, personality, and even the mood of the person shown. Preserving the record of someone’s appearance through portrait paintings used to be a very common practice in both western and eastern cultures.\(^\text{11}\) Court painters used to be appointed for the primary purpose of portrait painting. The practice of portraiture is likely found in prehistoric times and later continued to be handed down from civilization to civilization. In the Middle Ages, portraits depended almost always on the patron and involved different media, such as mosaic, illuminated manuscripts, and tapestries.\(^\text{12}\) Oil paintings became a very prominent medium for portrait painting from the Renaissance to the modern age. After the invention of the camera in the early 1800, portrait photography became another way to document human appearance. Since India was under different rulers across the time, Indians were not unaware of this documentation practice. Even though the origins of portrait painting were introduced earlier to the Indian subcontinent, such art was reserved for religious figures. The images were typically created to depict different deities. When the Mughal empire that was ruling over India, Indian portrait painting found a new application. Many famous Persian painters, such as Mir Sayyid Ali and Abd Al-Samad, came to the court of the Mughals and painted portraits of the emperors.\(^\text{13}\) In the time of Mughal Emperor Akbar, an artist named Kasu Das introduced European techniques into traditional painting.\(^\text{14}\) These miniature paintings were the at heart of Indian portraiture practiced until Raja Ravi Verma introduced a completely

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\(^{11}\) Ibid., 15-17.  
\(^{13}\) Akimuskin & Okada, *Arts of the Book*, 586.  
\(^{14}\) Ibid., 590.
new genre of painting around the mid-nineteenth century. Raja Ravi Verma was a master of oil painting, who was trained by Dutch portraitist, Theodor Jenson. Edgar Thurston, the British government in India, played a very important role in promoting Raja Ravi Verma's painting carrier. Raja Ravi Verma presented his paintings in Vienna in 1873 and was awarded a medal by the Austrian government. For the very first time, an artist from India presented oil portraits in an international context. As a consequence, India developed a taste for a new style of portrait painting, besides that of Mughal miniatures.

India was officially under British domination from 1876 onwards, yet the Indian States were powerful because of their size and political and military presence. Each part of the Indian subcontinent had its history and cultural heritage. Kapurthala and Indore were two of those princely states, which not only negotiated power and boundaries, but also exchanged mores with England. In this chapter, a traditional portrait painting executed by a local court artist of Tukoji Rao Holkar Bahadur, the Maratha Maharaja of Indore, will be analyzed and compared with the modernist twentieth-century portrait of his son Maharaja Yashwant Rao Holkar. There will be another comparison of female portraits of the Maharani of Indore with the Queen of Baroda, based on their taste in fashion and postures. This comparison is not only one from one generation to another or one state to the other. It highlights how traditional Indian portraiture was sidelined, at least for a while, by modern western aesthetics.

Shivaji Maharaj established the Maratha Empire in 1674. By the nineteenth century, the empire had become a confederacy of individual states controlled by Maratha chiefs, such

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16 Ibid., 16-18.  
17 Ibid., 25.  
18 Ibid., 78-82.  
20 Ibid., 5-8.
as the Holkars of Indore, of the Gaikwads of Baroda. All the Maharajas of Indore commissioned their paintings from court artists. Most of the Indian court artists were trained in the Mughal miniature manner of paintings.

In the Portrait of Maharaja Tukojirao Holkar Bahadur (Fig. 1), the father of Maharaja Yashwant Rao Holkar, the sitter is captured in the traditional attire of an Indian Maharaja. The older Maharaja is wearing a traditional Indian Banarasi kurta, draped with a robe around the waist. The heavy Kundan necklace reflects luxury and heritage. The decorative Pagri or headwear on his head used to be considered a symbol of pride for the Indian kings. His pose, right hand on his waist, left hand holding a sword, was a very typical pose of the Maharajas.

Maharaja Yashwant Rao Holker (Fig. 2) of Indore, was one of those rulers who had a keen interest in European portrait painting and modern design. His British private tutor Tom Hardy inculcated his inclination towards the European lifestyle. His teacher initially introduced him to the social lifestyle of the Europeans. Later, when the Maharaja went to Europe to study in Oxford, he would experience European modern art and fashionable lifestyle first hand. Because of his early education and appreciation of cultural diversity, he was very welcoming and friendly to Westerners and loved European art. During his study period, he befriended Henri-Pierre Roché, who later became a well-known figure in French society. By occupation, Roché was a writer and art dealer. Roché’s diary mentions his correspondence with the Maharaja several times. Roché used to call him “Bala.” The Harry Ransom Center in Austin preserves the

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21 Ibid., 20-22.  
25 Ibid., 188.
correspondence between the Maharaja and his artistic consultant, Roché (Figs. 3 and 4). Roché introduced him to the aristocrat society of Europe, and, in this way, he became the part of the café-society. The Maharaja was able to meet new people from the art world. During his frequent visits to Paris, the Maharaja began to appreciate the luxury of the Art Deco style. He first saw Art Deco portrait paintings in Paris at a time when Tamara de Lempicka painted the genre. In 1925, he planned to have a portrait of himself commissioned for his Palace in India. Roche introduced him Bernard Boutet de Monvel, who was a renowned French painter, sculptor, engraver, fashion illustrator, and interior decorator. He was famous for his geometricizing paintings from the early twentieth, and his Moroccan paintings made during World War I. Bernard Boutet de Monvel was asked by Maharaja, to paint his portrait. The Maharaja’s fondness of the European lifestyle and culture is perfectly reflected in the painting he commissioned from Boutet de Monvel in the summer of 1929 (Fig. 2). The painter depicted him standing in a tuxedo, wrapped in a black silk cape lined in white satin. This full-length portrait was painted in the small, personal studio of the artist's own apartment, located near the Lyon railway station in Paris. Rendered in a linear and almost monochromatic style, it highlighted the exceptional elegance of the sitter's appearance, enhanced by monumental proportion.

27 Ibid., 155
28 Ibid., 75-80
29 Ibid., 70-80.
Figure 1. Anonymous artist, *Portrait of Maharaja Tukoji Rao Holker*, oil on canvas, 1850.
This portrait of the Maharaja differs strangely from the traditional set-up and traditional context of Indian court portraits. Monvel’s portrait broke with the traditional appearance of Indian Maharaja Yashwant Rao Holkar and represented something very new, especially to the Indian audience. It was noted before the Persian court artists inspired Indian portraits from the
Mughal period, and this legacy continued until the twentieth century. As Maharaja Yashwant Rao belonged to the Maratha Family of Maharashtra, they had quite an elaborate genealogy of rulership.\(^{30}\)

Comparing the two portraits of the father, Tukojirao Holkar Bahadur and son Yashwant Rao Holkar, one can observe the shift to modernity. The fashionable portrait of the Maharaja painted Boutet de Monvel followed the cubist inspired manner. Also, the portrait was self-evidently close to the Art Deco society portraits of Tammara de Lempicka. The background of the portrait is white. On his left side, there is a long chimney piece, topped by a lidded Murano glass jar. The idea of depicting an object reflected in a mirror away was a very common device of European artists, especially in France. In Indian portrait painting, one typically finds a plain dark background, or a colored curtain as a background, so that the facial details remain the prime focus of the composition.\(^{31}\) Also, the ebonized chimneypiece was not self-evidently part of the traditional Indian interior but Housmanian apartments. India has very humid weather, and a long winter coat is not a regular dress for an Indore Maharaja like Yashwant Rao. Also, wearing his polished shoes would have been surprising. In the father's portrait, the Maharaja is directly looking at the spectator (Fig. 1). In the modern portrait, Maharaja is not directly looking out at the viewer. Moreover, the full-length pose goes back to court portraits of Anthony Van Dyck in the seventeenth century, but they too had no precedents in Indian art.

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\(^{30}\) Russell Harris. *The Lafayette Studio and Princely India*. (New Delhi: Roly books), 35.

Figure 3. Harry Ransom Center, correspondence with Maharaja Yashwant Rao Holkar and Henri Pierre Roche, Austin, 1936.
Figure 4. Harry Ransom Center, correspondence with Maharaja Yashwant Rao Holkar and Henri Pierre Roche, Austin, 1930.
Similar observations can be made about female sitters. One can cite the portrait of Maharani Indira Devi, Queen of Cooch Behar (Fig. 5) to this end. Philip Lazlo, an Anglo-
Hungarian painter, executed this portrait in 1933. The painter was commissioned to render her in a traditional Indian manner, which means the queen is wearing a white saree with golden zari border and with a pearl necklace, as well as traditional hairstyle. She is also wearing sandals. The background of the portrait is suffused in a misty monochrome.

Figure 6. Boutet de Monvel, *Portrait of Maharani Sanyogita Bai*, oil on canvas, 1935.

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For the modern painting, Boutet de Monvel was commissioned to record the portrait of Maharani Sanyogita Bai Holkar, the Indian Maharani of Yashwant Rao Holkar, who got married in 1924 (Fig. 6). In this painting, the Maharani is wearing a white satin gown and stands in front of a Baroque commode. The Maharani is wearing a beautiful Art Deco emerald and diamond necklace as well as a bracelet while her right hands clasp a light pink satin scarf spread out over the commode. Her hair is wavy following the hairstyle fashionable in the interwar years and set with a pin. There is a simple white porcelain vase with white lilies in her back on the commode and Murano glass mirror on the back wall.

When comparing the portraits of both queens (Figs. 5 and 6), one notices a major difference in the attire. Maharani Indira Devi is wearing a saree, a traditional Indian dress that consists of a drape varying from 4.5 to 8 meters in length. Sanyogita Bai, however, is wearing a completely Westernized outfit (Fig. 6). High stilettos replaced sandals. Maharani Sanyogita Bai did not put any scarf or veil over the head, like in other traditional Indian portraits of women. Covering one’s head used to symbolize humbleness in the conventional belief system of Indians, but the headscarf was edited out from Saniyoita Bai’s portrait. Maharani Sanyogita Bai wanted to present herself as a modern, emancipated, and westernized woman.

Besides portraiture, photography played a very important role in the life of Maharajas to commemorate the time of their rule. Various British photographers went to India to record the historical monuments and the varied landscape of the country. William Johnson and William Henderson were appointed to take photos of various people and published two volumes entitled Oriental Races and Tribes. In 1868, Captain Meadows Taylor published the

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34 Vidya Dehejia, India Through the lens. (Ahmedabad :Mapin Publishing), 26-27.
People of India, an eight-volume set that contained 500 original photographs. The very first photographic society of India was found in 1854 in Bombay and, in 1857, in Bengal and Madras. Photographic societies greatly contributed to spreading the theory and practice of photography. Some of the contemporary rulers like the Raja of Chamba, Ramsingh, the Maharaja of Jaipur, the Maharaja of Benaras, and their consorts also took up to photography. Given that Maharaja Yashwant Rao Holkar had a fascination with all modern aspects of life, he wanted to be photographed by the most fashionable photographer of his time.37 During his trip to Paris, He was introduced to Man Ray through his friend Henri Pierre-Roche. Man Ray was Californian by birth, who had joined Andre Breton’s Surrealist group in Paris, where he became famous for his photographs. The young king decided to go to Paris with his wife for their honeymoon in 1938. Since the king already knew Man Ray, he went to the artist's Parisian studio to be photographed in western attire. In the next year, this artsy couple continued their honeymoon in the south of France. The Maharaja booked an entire floor in the hotel, George V, for their photoshoot in a hotel in south France and invited Man Ray to meet them. The next day Man Ray was asked to bring his camera to take a series of pictures of the young couple. Man Ray recorded all these details in his diary.38 The photos captured by Man Ray diverge radically from the previous photographic traditions known in India.

36 Ibid., 30.
37 Addade, Barnard Boutet De Monvel, 180-182.
38 Man Ray, Man Ray: Photography and it's double, (Berkeley: Gingko Press, Inc), 80-82.
Maharaja Yashwant Rao Holkar is wearing a satin nightgown in many of the photographs (Fig. 7). He is looking at the queen's eye with a smile on his face. In the example illustrated, the queen is leaning over the left shoulder of the Maharaja, wearing a sleeveless satin dress and bending her head.
Figure 8. Old Indian Photos archive, Photograph of a newly wedded couple 1928.

Traditional Indian photographs of newlyweds are much more formal. The individuals do not show any personal affections to each other. A typical example is the illustrated photo of an Indian couple from the early twentieth century (Fig. 8). In this shot, the couple is standing together without bodily contact. Both sitters appear in traditional dress. The dress code of the Man Ray photos and the traditional Indian costumes could not be more different. Not only the composition but also the dresses and poses were extremely westernized. After studying the portraits and photographs, one can notice that the Maharaja of Indore, not only liked the European lifestyle but also adopted modernity in his own life.
However, Maharaja Yashwant Rao Holkar met both Boutet de Monveal and Man Ray, through his friend Roche. There is no specific evidence that Monvel and Man Ray met, but their commission worked for the Maharaja reveals a consistent style and mentality. The portrait paintings for the Maharaja was close to the Art Deco paintings made by Tamarra de Lempicka. Furthermore, the avant grade photographer Man Ray combined modern poetic and technological aesthetics. It can be presumed that the Maharaja exactly knew the way he wanted to be portrayed and photographed.
Furniture and Interior

Furniture is a necessity of daily life, but sometimes it becomes an expression of taste and a form of dialogue from one civilization to another. Furniture can define the character of the owners. Western furniture was traditionally not a part of Indian interiors. When the Portuguese arrived in India in the late fifteenth century, they observed that there was no local know-how for the production of the furniture. Later on, the Portuguese, Dutch, British, and French, filled this vacuum in different ways. Furniture in India was commissioned from local carpenters in hardwood copies of basic prototypical forms. By the early eighteenth century, India was successfully able to incorporate homegrown design into westernized of furniture, even though the native contributions were limited. In eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Indian furniture came to be regarded as traditional design, which appealed to English furniture collectors, who enjoyed exotic materials and Indian decoration. Although the techniques used for the ornamentation of furniture were Indian, the decorative features themselves were designed to appeal to European consumers. In this respect, Anglo-Indian furniture of this period was exotic for both the producers and for the users of such furniture.

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there were only a few places where furniture could be decorated, especially with Indian techniques. Vizaapatam, Murshidabad, and Travancore were famous for Ivory inlays on furniture. Patna was known for painted furniture and Mumbai (New Bombay) for micromosaic furniture. Centers for the production of customized furniture grew quickly in the early nineteenth century, as a result of the gradual

39 Amin Jaffer. Furniture from British India and Ceylon. (Massachusetts: Peabody Essex Museum), 11
40 Ibid., 10-20.
41 Ibid., 11-15.
42 Ibid., 11-15.
43 Ibid., 35-38.
44 Ibid., 12-20.
exchange between the British Empire and continental Europe. Different princes from different Indian states had the chance to explore European furniture designs through their travels abroad. Concurrently, in Europe, the Art Deco style was on the rise. Whereas Indian furniture adopted highly ornamented features, Europe was heading towards simplicity and elegance. Mid-nineteenth-century India witnessed the birth of art schools based on the western models of training that also affected the furniture. Art schools in India aimed to preserve traditional craft skills in the face of declining patronage.

In many cases, this mission was achieved by encouraging Indian artisans to produce Western-style goods that would find a ready market among the local European population. In early nineteenth-century Europe, a link existed between human needs and the technology that accommodates them. Furniture was no different. Not only did the carvers design the furniture themselves, but architects also contributed to furniture making. The beginning of the century saw new developments in furniture. Germany championed mass-produced modern and functional design through the Bauhaus designer, such as Walter Gropius. Later, furniture was devoiced of stylish decoration, which was replaced by simpler forms, more neutralistic design, making it possible to modify the interior environment more easily. In India, British Raj has commissioned a palace building, which was adapted and reproduced by the Maharajas. The Princes relinquished their traditional enclosed structures and commissioned their palace, based on a western plan and interior. Princes educated in a European manner found that traditional palaces were difficult to reconcile with their modern lifestyles. Despite this context, new palaces needed to provide for the strict division of space between public and private areas.

In order to reside in modern, Western-style palaces, Maharajas had to commission European architects and designers, who attempted to fuse western features with fractional designs to the palaces. In this chapter, modern interiors commissioned by Indian Maharajas will be discussed and compared with traditional Indian interior and furniture.

The intention to blend Indian and Western styles could be slowly but surely observed in Indian architectural design. Laxmi Vilas and Amba Vilas in Mysore were great examples of early twentieth century palaces embellished with imported components. British decorators had showrooms and agents in India, who competed for the task of furnishing the Maharajas palaces. Among the most successful of these firms was Waring & Gillow, which secured the contract for decorating Hyderabad House, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens. The Manik Bagh palace in Indore, however, was a dream project of Maharaja Yashwant Rao Holkar. He planned to commission a modern structure, different from other Indian palaces, and distinct from the Lal Bagh Palace, commissioned by his father, Tukojirao Holkar.

The architecture of the palace was finalized in 1931. The palace had a traditional layout consisting of an entrance hall, reception rooms, a library, a music room, a banquet hall, also a garden with a pond.

Awnings and verandas protected the palace for better air ventilation. The palace had a simple appearance from the outside, but the inside was a masterpiece of modernist interior design. Yashwant Rao Holkar turned the new Manik Bah palace into an Art Deco paradise. He commissioned modern contemporary artists with the help of his friend Henri-Pierre Roche. As mentioned before, Henri-Pierre Roche was the person who introduced him to modern society art and design in Europe. Through Roche, the Maharaja met the famous fashion designer

48 Ibid., 229
49 Ibid., 229.
Jacques Doucet in 1929. Douchet was famous for his interiors that combine furniture by Eileen Gray with Picasso’s Demoiselles d’Avignon, which he then owned. The famous of the surrealist movement, Andre Breton, was Douchet’s art advisor. Maharajah Yashwant Rao Holkar wrote this short note to Jacques Doucet, a French art collector appreciating his home Interior- “This is a great experience to meet you personally, which changed my idea of design. Every corner of this room is beautiful.” On October 22, 1929.  

After coming back from the trip in 1929, Maharaja finalized the construction of Manik Bagh Palace. He commissioned Eckart Muthesius to create an entirely contemporary palace. He also appointed Eileen Gray, Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann, Louis Sogno, and Ivan Da Silva to design furniture for him to decorate his new mansion. Manik Bagh was a celebration of life in the “Machine Age” and proved to be both innovative and aesthetically significant. Much of the accessories, light settings, switches, and handles were made in Germany. Jacques-Emile Ruhlmann designed the furniture for the study room (Fig. 9), including the Chaise Longue "aux Skis" (Fig. 10) in 1929 as part of the study room. This Chaise Longue was presented that same year at the Salon des Artistes Décorateurs in Paris, where Maharaja saw acquired it, but his name was kept confidential. The suite included never-before- seen modernist pieces of furniture, including the Chaise Longue. Based on period references, only two models of Chaise Longue appear to have been executed by the designer. The only other known example of the Chaise Longue features minor variations, namely the absence of lacquer on the armrest and the

51 Ibid., 214-217.
54 Breon. Ruhlmann,130-150
55 Ibid., 130-150.
absence of electric switches controlling the heating system located on the footrest. The critics at that time praised the designs which Ruhlmann presented at the Salon. Notably, a famous critic from Art et Décoration, René Chavance, described Ruhlmann’s newest creation as modern and elegant.\(^{56}\)

Figure 9. Study Room, Manik Bagh Palace, 1935.

Figure 10. Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann, Chaise Longue “Aux Skis” for the Maharaja of Indore, 1929.

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\(^{56}\) Ibid., 100-250.
In 1931, Louis Sognot and Charlotte Alix designed and added the bed in the master bedroom (Fig. 11) of Manik Bagh Palace. The material of the bed was a chrome-plated aluminum and glass. Georges Djo-Bourgeois designed the glass and metal table in the Image of the bedroom, and the carpets were by Ivan da Silva Bruhns. Muthesius was commissioned for the lighting of the whole palace. Also, he designed a dressing table for the queen, made of white metal and mirror. The dressing table (Fig. 12) was produced in Berlin by Schlosserei Otto Frieske and equipped with plugs for a hairdryer and facilities for heating Maharani Sanyogita’s curling irons. Muthesius dedicated his energy from 1929 to 1932 to the creation of this Modernist mansion. Muthesius himself designed the lamp and the interior in concordance with his modernist architectural vision, and with the intent of making the room a complete work of art. The floor lamp (Fig. 13) was used in the bedrooms of the Maharaja and Maharani, as evidenced by different photographs of that period. This model was one of six different floor lamp designs created specifically for the palace.

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57 Ibid., 100-250.
59 Ibid., 20-60.
Figure 11. by Louis Sognot and Charlotte Alix, *Master Bedroom*, Manik Bagh Palace designed, 1935.

Figure 12. Schlosser Otto Frieske, *Dressing Table of the Maharani*, Manik Bah Palace, 1934.
Figure 13. Muthesius, Lamp, Manik Bagh Palace, 1935.
Where the Maharaja was busy commissioning modernist furniture for his palace, concurrently, Indian furniture designers also began to master new techniques. Bombay became known as its hub of richly floral open-worked design in the early twentieth century. Most of the furniture in this area was made of blackwood, the timber, and brought to Bombay from the Malabar Coast. Workshops for such furniture were located in the Meadow street of Bombay, and the main customers were upper-class Indian or British colonial society. For instance, the blackwood sofa from the Zanzibar Agency collection (Fig. 14), has carved and open-worked back, with later upholstery added. The back is curving, with a central projecting lobe flanked on either side by a higher, rounded cove-shaped lobe. It is a perfect example of a skillfully carved and sensitive arrangement of ornamental motifs. This type of sofa was very common from 1850 onwards.

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61 Ibid., 343.  
62 Ibid., 342.
Figure 14. *Bombay Presidency Sofa*, H 95 w 168 hight of seat 29, 1890.

Compared to the blackwood sofa from Bombay, for example, Ruhamaan’s Chaise Longue from Maharaja’s study room was a unique piece of furniture in the context of India. Ruhlmann created these simplified forms of the modern age Art Deco style, which drew both on Cubism and the tradition of French furniture craftsmanship descending from the Reubenites of the eighteenth century. Ruhlmann was both famous for the exquisite quality, and technological finesse of chrome-plated steel designer pieces. The Chaise Longue shows Ruhlmann's fondness for new materials like chromium-plated steel.
and radically dynamic forms. The Chaise Longue itself is equipped with an adjustable, black-lacquered wood frame, a heated footrest, and a side lamp located to the upper right side of the backrest. The form is evocative and a common one that Ruhlmann used on other pieces from the Studio-Chambre suite, including a bar cabinet and a leather-upholstered armchair. The final creation is a truly modernist and innovative masterpiece created for an international patron of modernist architecture and design. On the other hand, the Bombay blackwood sofa is open-curved, features stylized tree of life and floral forms, and a vignette center consisting of two birds, rabbits, and dogs flanked by horses. The introduction of animal motifs is a very common feature of Indian furniture. Structural changes are the most noticeable difference between the traditional blackwood sofa and the Chaise Longue. The modern installations like light, moveable back, heated footstep in Chaise Longue adds a new idea of experiencing furniture.

Maharaja Yashwant Rao Holkar was not the only one who was fascinated by Art Deco Interior. Umaid Singh, the Maharaja of Jodhpur, was another artistic patron of emerging modern art and design. He commissioned Umaid Bhawan Palace, an Art Deco style residence in Jodhpur, which is now active as a five-star hotel. English architect Henry Lanchester designed Umaid Bhawan Palace in the popular Indo-Saracenic style in between 1928 to 1940. The Maharaja chose elegant and modern Art Deco interiors befitting this royal palace. Marble and chrome settings in bathrooms and fireplaces in the interior were the most appreciated features of the palace (Fig. 15 & 16). While being surrounded by opulent Art Deco interiors, one will feel the essence of India in the interior. The floor design is based on peacocks strut and, hunting trophies of royal tiger hunts adorn the walls of public spaces.

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64 Ibid., 150-230.
Holkar’s Manik Bagh and Umaid Bhawan palace reflected a completely different taste from contemporary Indian palaces. Maharajas not only chose Art Deco interior for the public
places, but they also commissioned best designers for their private places like bedrooms and bathrooms. Through this choice, it can be presumed he was an unapologetic lover of modern art and design.
Jewelry

Beautifying one’s appearance is an instinct, which grew more urgent over time. Beginnings, however, humans adorned their bodies, whether to make one more attractive to others or as a symbol of social status. Beautification was always an essential part of the culture, customs, and art. On the Indian subcontinent, jewelry is a very common element of culture and lifestyle. However, as time changes, many outer influences affected the design and use of jewelry. In matters of beautification, nature always played an important role, and the Indian subcontinent was not different from that tendency. In terms of jewelry, most native designers were inspired by nature. Through time, the original idea of jewelry was modified to embrace many ideas from different cultures and regions. Ornaments are the symbol of beauty and adornment, as specified by the patron. Most of the ornaments tell a history related to belief, local history, culture, and religion. The original concept of jewelry got evolved when Indian people got introduced to the outer world. The typology of jewelry also depends on the availability of materials at a particular place.

Jewelry distinguishes different classes of people. Brass and metals are not regarded as precious material in the higher class of jewelry or society. From the Mughal period to this very date, jewelry has been an important part of Indian culture. In the Mughal tradition, jewelry was an integral aspect of articulating authority. Mughal rulers valued gems for their rarity and physical properties. Also, India’s rich culture of jewelry is directly a result of its natural resources. The mines of Golconda yielded the highest category of diamonds. Also, Kashmir

66 Ibid., 100-120.
67 Ibid., 100-150.
68 Ibid., 120-200.
produced the rarest and most beautiful sapphires. The greatest emeralds arrived in India via the port of Goa, through the commercial exchange with other countries.

This chapter will discuss the technical differences and stylistic trends within the jewelry of India during the twentieth century, with special attention to Art Deco jewelry imported from Europe to India by the Maharajas.

From the Great Mughals to the Maharajas, Indian jewelry went through different styles. An exhibition held in Paris, from March 29 to June 5, 2017, showed jewels from the Al Thani Collection, which demonstrated the evolution of taste and technique in India’s jewelry arts over five centuries.

Often, Western jewelers were welcomed to the court to teach new gem-cutting techniques to court jewelers during the Mughal period. Traditional designs were always greatly varied, and the court artist used to create custom-made jewelry to please the patrons. The advent of the Mughals in the sixteenth century brought innovations in use and design. Mughals advanced art and knowledge of jewelry engineering, especially in the combination of gems and metals. Also, the possession of precious metals and gems were restricted to the ruling class since it was a symbol of power and political status. During this period, uniquely, Mughal style jewelry developed, which fused Indian and Persian influences. The elaborate Meenakari enameling technique, traditional rose-cut diamonds, and Kundun inlaid rubies, sapphires, and emeralds that are characteristic of Mughal jewelry. Mughal emperors wore turban ornaments as a sign of their

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69 Ibid., 120-200.
70 Ibid., 120-200.
71 Ibid., 130-200.
72 Ibid., 120-200.
73 Ibid., 150-200.
74 Ibid., 120-200.
power. Often designed as large jeweled brooches and backed by plumes of feathers, these objects represented an opportunity to show off large gemstones. Usually worn only by the emperor, turban ornaments were given as presents by the emperors in exceptional circumstances. A headpiece from the seventeenth century is an appropriate example of the craftsmanship of Mughal jewelers (Fig. 17). The jewelry highlights two contrasting colors and brings together two fundamental Indian jewelry techniques, gold platting and gemstones mounted on the gold surface. From Mughal times, enameling was used, and its fabrication marks one usually hidden from view on the back of ornaments set with kundans, rubies. Kundan is a traditional form of Indian gemstone technique involving a gem set with a gold foil between the stones and its mount. It originated from the royal court of Rajasthan. This headpiece below shows both techniques, which are still a characteristic of traditional Indian jewelry crafted today.

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75 Ibid., 120-200.
Figure 17. Turban Jewelry, Al Thani Collection, 1600-1700.

Figure 18. Maharaja Jagjit Singh of Kapurthala and the hexagonal Tiara on his head. 1927.
A change in typology in the design of jewelry gradually appeared in the wake of growing Western influences on in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.\textsuperscript{76} Indian Maharajas started to commission jewelry from renowned jewelers in western countries. Such work can be seen, the example in a turbaned portrait for Maharaja Jagjit Singh of Kapurthala (Fig. 18). The Maharaja of Kapurthala commissioned Cartier in Paris to design him a Tiara (Headpiece) consisting of nineteen emeralds of various shapes, brilliants, rose-cut diamonds, and pearls.\textsuperscript{77} The central hexagonal emerald alone weighed 17,740 carats. Open settings allowed light to shine through cut diamonds and emeralds. If one compares both of the turban jewelry from the seventeenth century with the twentieth-century examples, one finds structural similarities in the mounts of the and gemstones. The one made in the Mughal period contains Kundan work, while the Cartier adorned the necklace with diamonds for the Maharaja. Gemstones from both headpieces were machine cut. The stones on the turban jewelry from the Mughal period are set by hand, but the one from Cartier used the machine for stone arrangement on the Art Deco headpiece.

\textsuperscript{76} Amin, \textit{Made for Maharajas}, 160-230.  
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 160-200
In the early twentieth century, Europe produced some unique designs of jewelry. Jewelry was an integral part of the decorative arts, and Art Deco jewelry introduced geometricized, modern forms of jewelry. In 1936, the Maharaja of Indore commissioned from the Paris firm of Mauboussin, a 47- caret diamond and emerald necklace. Mauboussin was then one of the biggest and most prestigious jewelry houses for Art Deco jewelry (Fig. 19). Jean Goulet, a designer from Mauboussin, was invited to Indore and asked to create an exclusive design for the court. He was given a two-month timeline to appraise the

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78 Ibid., 100-200.
Maharaja’s treasury. Later, Maharaja Yashwant Rao Holker appointed Mauboussin as his official court jeweler. He also had commissioned several fine jewelry pieces from the jewelry house Chaumet, including the Indore pear diamonds (Fig. 20).  

Figure 20. Chaumet, *Indore Pear Diamonds*, 1920.

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79 Ibid., 100-200.
Another Art Deco necklace (Fig. 21) was created for Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala in 1928. This platinum set embellished with diamond, white topazes, synthetic rubies, smokey quartz, a citrine, white zirconias, and yellow zirconia. An extraordinary ceremonial piece, it was originally displayed was a rich selection of Patiala diamonds, amounting to 962.25 carats.\textsuperscript{80} The central pendant solitaire is a light yellow, 234.65 carat De Beers diamond.\textsuperscript{81} This beautiful Yellow Diamond was exhibited at the Exposition

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 100-200
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 100-200
Universelle in Paris in 1889, and purchased by the Patiala Maharaja right after the exhibition.

Maharajas had an aesthetic sense for appreciating art that extended to jewelry. Indian Maharajas observed the European aristocracy either by getting in touch with the British colonial expatriates or visiting Europe in person. They always had admired the modern appearance of Europeans. Maharajas were not a part of European society. However, they had enough money to spend. Maharajas embraced the outer appearance of the European lifestyle, which they sometimes pushed to new heights. As mentioned before, that India was a hub for diamond production, and presumably, the Maharajas wanted to bring professionally back the Indian gemstones to the country. From the Mughal time, goldsmiths of India certainly competent in the art of making jewelry. They learned new techniques, but the types of machinery needed for cutting or polishing stones were not available locally in the first half of the twentieth century. The magnificent Maharajas had experienced the sparklings cuts of western stones, and they came from the game places that lure them with modern design. As a result, they appointed the biggest jewelry houses of the time to design for them.
Conclusion

During the colonial period, Indian Maharajas came to embrace European culture and lifestyles. The Maharajas ruled under the British Raj, while The East India Company operated the Indian States. Indian Maharajas had to first learn about the European lifestyle through education and travel. Being allied with the various western trading companies, the Maharajas showed a taste for western goods, which reflected their political loyalty. The Maharajas had to negotiate and thus fraternized with Europeans frequently. Eventually, they began to adopt aspects of the western high-society lifestyle and behavior. These maharajas were aware of the current fashion trend in Europe, and they had both the money and the taste to appreciate modernity. Their tendency to be a part of the European lifestyle encouraged them to commission paintings, photography, furniture, and jewelry. Maharaja Yashwant Rao Holkar commissioned Boutet de Monvel for his and his wife’s westernized portrait. He also commissioned Man Ray for photography. Maharani Indira Devi from Cooch Bihar also commissioned Hungarian portraitist, Philip de Lazlo. Maharajas commissioned Art Deco furniture and interior designer for their palace. Furthermore, Maharajas were patrons of European jewelry made by famous jewelry houses in France. The Maharajas' interests in contemporary creativity and craftsmanship, which led them to discover the modern world. In some cases, they filtered this modernity through their native, traditional views. In other cases, they sought to outdo Westerners in their own game, the game to bring modern and ahead of one’s time.
Bibliography


Vita

Humaira Hossain was born in 1994, in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. She completed her bachelor’s degree in art history from University of Dhaka as a valedictorian in 2017. In the spring of 2018, she moved to United States to pursue her master’s degree in art history at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge. She worked as a graduate teaching assistant for Dr. Darius Spieth and Dr. William Ma in the Department of Art History. She also appeared as guest lecturer in Survey of Asian Art and Indian Art courses. Her research interest is focused on South Asian art. Upon her graduation in May 2020, she plans to work in museum or archives to get a hands-on experience in art history. She plans to apply for her PhD in 2021.